IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend paragraph **[0049]** as follows:

[0049] As shown in FIG. 3, a outer peripheral ~~edge 44~~ edge 42 of support ring 40 may be substantially coextensive and, thus, in substantial alignment with an outer peripheral edge 18 of semiconductor substrate 10.

Please amend paragraph **[0060]** as follows:

[0060] With continued reference to FIGs. 8 and 9, each protective structure 28, 28′ of interior portion 160, 160′ of support member 140, 140′ includes at least one aperture 162, 162′ through which a corresponding bond pad 27 of the corresponding, underlying semiconductor device 24f is exposed.

Please amend paragraph **[0074]** as follows:

[0074] A material consolidation system 1200 is associated with fabrication tank 1100 in such a way as to direct consolidating energy 1220 into chamber 1110 thereof, toward at least areas of surface 1128 of volume 1124 of unconsolidated material 1126 within reservoir 1120 that are located over semiconductor substrate 10. Consolidating energy 1220 may comprise, for example, electromagnetic radiation of a selected wavelength or a range of wavelengths, an electron beam, or other suitable energy for consolidating unconsolidated material 1126. Material consolidation system 1200 includes a source 1210 of consolidating energy 1220. If consolidating energy 1220 is focused, source 1210 or a location control element 1212 associated therewith (*e.g.*, a set of galvanometers or mirrors, including one for x-axis movement and another for y-axis movement) may be configured to direct, or position, consolidating energy 1220 toward a plurality of desired areas of surface 1128. Alternatively, if consolidating energy 1220 remains relatively unfocused, it may be directed generally toward surface 1128 from a single, fixed location or from a plurality of different locations. In any event, operation of source 1210, as well as movement thereof, if any, may be effected under the direction of controller 1700.

Please amend paragraph **[0096]** as follows:

[0096] Turning now to FIGs. 14A and 14B, thinning of back side 16 of semiconductor ~~substrate 12~~ substrate 10 is schematically depicted. Although FIGs. 14A and 14B illustrate backgrinding of a semiconductor substrate 10 that includes a support ring 40 on at least active surface 12 thereof, backgrinding may also be effected with another embodiment of support structure of the present invention on at least active surface 12, as well as with another embodiment of semiconductor substrate (*e.g.*, semiconductor substrate 10', shown in FIG. 9).